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SCIENCE

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BOTANICAL ACHIEVEMENT¹

TWENTY-FIVE years ago The Botanical Society of America imposed on me the task of preparing a presidential address. To-day I meet a similar obligation laid on me by the somewhat more democratized society which continues to bear that name.

For my subject then, I took botanical opportunity—moved, you may say, by the hopefulness of youth which looks forward and plans optimistically. To-day I wish to speak of botanical achievement—moved, you may say, by the observed tendency of age to live in the past. Possibly, later, you may not be sure that in choosing complementary subjects I have not wanted to extract much the same hopeful anticipatory lesson from both.

As one looks back over the past, he sometimes finds it difficult to pick out the significance of individual components of the conglomeration that forms the present superstructure of our science, and its foundations are buried in obscurity. Perhaps the most significant observation that he makes is that a person who is minded to add to it has each year to climb to a greater height before his own work can be commenced—unless he turn his attention to repairing the weaknesses and filling the crevices and pointing-up what has been done by others.

Work of this kind really makes the structure stronger, really keeps it from crumbling at some weak point under the weight that has been added above, and gives it an appearance of finish that must be secured at some time and by some one's labor before it can meet with final approval under critical inspection. Undertaking it may bring to light, even, wholly faulty workmanship or the incorporation of materials that have already begun to

¹ Address of retiring president of the Botanical Society of America, given at the Botanists' dinner, St. Louis, December 31, 1919.